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Saint John Chrysostom's Theory and Practice of Preaching

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SAINT JOHN CHRYSTOCOM'S THEORY
AND PRACTICE OF PREACHING

by

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LIFE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................... 1

Patron of preachers--Purpose of this thesis--Relation between oratorical theories of Chrysostom and Augustine--Choice of sample sermons--Opportuneness of this thesis--Laudation of Chrysostom by Sozomen, Campbell, Bossuet, Montfaucon, Cayre, D'Alton, Schaff--Reasons for present neglect.

II. THE SOURCES OF CHRYSOSTOM'S ELOQUENCE ............. 8

Classical studies--First and Second Sophistic--Proof of classical influence on Chrysostom--Defects of Second Sophistic--Supreme influence of Scripture--Literal exegesis of Diodorus--Close contact with audience--Problems caused by audience--Laudation of Chrysostom's oratory by Fortescue, Montfaucon, Schaff, Duebner.

III. GENERAL NORMS FOR PREACHERS ......................... 18

Value of treatise On the Priesthood--Plot of treatise--Topic of Books Four and Five--Stress on preacher's character--Augustine's restoration of classical rhetoric--Essential qualities of an orator--Chrysostom's agreement with Augustine on essential qualities--Chrysostom's purity of intention.

IV. CONTEXT AND CONTENT OF FIVE SERMONS ............... 32

Revolt at Antioch and the consolatory sermons on the Statues--Homily Seventeen--Captivating effect of these homilies--First Panegyric on St. Paul--Chrysostom's method of scriptural exposition--Homily on Eighth Psalm--Homily against drunkards and on the Resurrection--Story of Eutropius--Sermon in defense of Eutropius--D'Alton's critique.
V. WISDOM

Chief purpose of preaching—Preacher’s wisdom indicated by understanding of Scripture—Frequent use of Scripture by Chrysostom—Scriptural law of love—Expression of love for God and men in Seventeenth Homily on the Statues, First Panegyric on St. Paul, explanation of Eighth Psalm, sermon on the Resurrection, in Defense of Eutropius—Effects of Chrysostom’s wisdom.

VI. CLARITY

Importance of clarity—Chrysostom’s exemplary clarity—Varied repetition in sermon on the Resurrection and in homily on Eighth Psalm—Parallel repetition and other aids to clarity in homily on Eighth Psalm—Rich and simple vocabulary.

VII. FITTINGNESS


VIII. CHARM


IX. PERFECTION OF LANGUAGE

Chrysostom’s practical purity of language—His usual precision—Skillful arrangement resulting from infrequent hiatus, apt alliteration, pleasant assonance, artful transposition and smooth phrasing—Verbal dignity—Sublime thought beautifully expressed.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Pope Pius X in 1909 proclaimed St. John Chrysostom the heavenly patron of preachers of the divine word. The Vicar of Christ chose this bishop of ancient Constantinople as the model for all who announce the good news of salvation. The Church passed by Augustine, Basil the Great, mellifluous Bernard and other renowned preachers to award the first place to the Golden-mouthed Doctor.

It would be possible and profitable to demonstrate why Chrysostom has won this supreme honor, but the best way to appreciate his eloquence is to read his works in their original dress. In fact, his writings offer a powerful motive for learning Greek. This thesis, however, will attempt to show how St. John Chrysostom in various types of sermons and at different periods of his public activity applied the norms for a preacher which are stated in the fourth book of St. Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana, the first

1 Acta Apostolicae Sedis, I, Nov. 20, 1909, 793.
manual of Christian rhetoric. It will also essay to point out any changes in the proficiency with which he carried these norms into practice as well as any modification of theory discernible from his actual practice.

Chrysostom did not write a handbook of sacred oratory such as the De Doctrina Christiana. His ideas on the matter are found in statements scattered throughout many of his works, but his chief thoughts are set forth in Books Four and Five of the treatise On the Priesthood. These thoughts, as will be proved later, are in complete agreement with the principles of De Doctrina Christiana in which the oratorical standards of Greece and Rome are applied to the task of the Christian preacher.

Chrysostom discusses the character of the preacher in relation to oratory; Augustine treats oratory in relation to the preacher's character; therefore, the theory of the one can be used to supplement the theory of the other.

The selecting of sermons to serve as samples of Chrysostom's art presents considerable difficulties because he has


4 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 8-13.
left us a more extensive literature than any other Greek Father with the possible exception of Origen.\(^5\) His works form a spacious treasurehouse into which few enter. As will be pointed out hereafter the five discourses chosen to illustrate Chrysostom's theory of preaching are among his best sermons.

In almost any biography of Chrysostom the author frequently has reason for comparing a particular point of theory with a certain course of action,\(^6\) but among the numerous works on the Saint there exists no explicit comparison of his main theories and customary practice. It seems safe to assume that Chrysostom usually made his speaking conform to his explicit ideals; yet this assumption does not reveal what his guiding principles were nor how he realized them amid the pressures of daily life. Such a revelation is the aim of this thesis.

The work of St. John Chrysostom has not been made the basis of this thesis only because Pope Pius X has commended him. The papal encomium does not stand alone; it represents the climax of fifteen centuries of praise and admiration. From the very beginning the magnetism of his eloquence was apparent.


\(^6\) For some examples see: Donald Attwater, St. John Chrysostom, Milwaukee [1939], 27, 33, 54, 88.
'The people flocked to him,' says the historian Sozomen, 'as often as he preached. They hung upon his words, and could not have enough of them; so that, when they thrust and jammed themselves together in an alarming way, everyone making an effort to get nearer to him, and to hear him more perfectly, he took his seat in the midst of them and taught from the pulpit of the reader.'

Campbell gives a broad conspectus of Chrysostom's posthumous fame.

Within a century of his death the Orient was calling him Chrysostom, the 'golden-mouthed,' in tribute to the talent by which he is always first remembered. He is not only the mightiest orator of Greek Christianity; Demosthenes alone of orators who spoke in Greek has had a wider posthumous audience. His thought and pictures and very words were the texture for countless sermons in the centuries following his own. His structureless homiletic method and gorgeous rhetorical ornaments fell out of fashion at last, but not his thought; for Chrysostom by preference treated of moral themes in the pulpit, which are in fashion in every age. And he treated of them so richly and forcefully and luminously and finally that the moral thought of Chrysostom is the ultimate quarry of much solid modern preaching.

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

Orator, exegete, essayist, educationalist, witness to and confessor of the Faith, St. John Chrysostom is the best known and best loved of the Greek Fathers. More of him has survived, he has been translated more frequently and more widely and has been published more extensively than any other Father of the Orient. ... The Antiochenes called him 'Great Teacher of the Earth' and Pope Celestine repeated the title. ... In the education of Byzantine youth he had a place along side of Homer and Isocr-
The Pelagian heretics were apparently his first Latin translators. At any rate they enlisted his prestige in their struggle with St. Augustine, and the greatest of Latin doctors, thus brought to a knowledge of his works, appealed to his authority and introduced him to the Latin Church in glowing eulogy. St. Thomas Aquinas, the prince of scholastics and the central point of all subsequent Catholic theology, is deeply in debt to him and the only less important St. Bonaventure cites him frequently. And the greatest of the humanists surpasses them all in practical manifestation of his enthusiasm—no less than twenty-seven distinct works of Erasmus being devoted to Chrysostom. In seventeenth-century France he was the great model of the classic preachers. Every century since the High Renaissance—whether the motive has been religious, philological, dogmatical-historical or humanistic—has translated and edited him. And thus his direct as well as indirect influence is still a living thing.

Bossuet calls Chrysostom "the most illustrious of preachers, and beyond question the most eloquent that ever taught the Church." The learned Benedictine Bernard de Montfaucon insisted that he gladly undertook arduous labors "de Joanne Chrysostomo. .. tanto doctor, oratore summo qui rem Christianam plus quam alii omnes, tum qui praecesserunt, tum qui post illum floruerunt, eloquentiae ornamentis decoravit."

Cayré states that "together with Saint Augustine, Saint John Chrysostom is the most eminent master of Christian eloquence."¹¹ D'Alton affirms that as a pulpit orator Chrysostom "stood without a rival among the Fathers, and he might well challenge comparison with the greatest of the profane orators."¹²

Protestants too have paid their tribute to Chrysostom's skill. Philip Schaff, a professor in the Union Theological Seminary, New York, says, "The crowning merit of Chrysostom is his excellency as a preacher. He is generally and justly regarded as the greatest pulpit orator of the Greek church. Nor has he any superior or equal among the Latin Fathers. He remains to this day a model for preachers in large cities."¹³

Although the judgment of the ages definitely favors John Chrysostom, he is known far better by his reputation than by his works. Few read his works today for at least two reasons: first, a reading knowledge of Greek is extremely rare; secondly, much of Chrysostom's work has not been translated. It is regrettable that only a very few, even among students of theology, can read him in Greek. Nevertheless, they can and should make his leading princi-


¹² D'Alton, Selections, 33.

ples of preaching their own. It is the aim of this thesis to present these principles and to elucidate them from the practice of their proponent.
CHAPTER II

THE SOURCES OF CHRYSOSTOM'S ELOQUENCE

Chrysostom like every other man owed very much to the culture in which he lived and he showed his wisdom by making use of all that was best in it. The factors of prime importance in his oratorical formation may be divided into three groups: first, classical literature and sophistic doctrine; second, Holy Scripture and Diodorus; third, his audiences in Antioch and Constantinople.

Chrysostom went through the complete course of classical studies according to the scheme of ancient education—grammar, poetry, rhetoric and philosophy. The thoroughness with which John studied the Greek classics can be seen both by many features of his style and by frequent allusions to great writers, especially Plato. At this time the rhetors of the New or Second Sophistic dominated classical education; they were considered peers of the ancient masters or even superior to them and so came to be imitated as classics, although their works were at best only

1 Attwater, St. John Chrysostom, 10.

The period of the First Sophistic began about the year 450 B.C. The name Sophist was given to educated men of ready speech who used to travel through Greece and teach what they knew for money. They popularized the interest in knowledge which had up to their time been confined within narrow circles; they were the first to make style an object of study and to undertake serious investigations into the art of rhetorical expression. The chief end of their teaching was to make their pupils versatile in the use of speech and thus to prepare them for participation in public life. The outstanding men of this first period were Protagoras of Abdera, Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Ceos and Hippias of Elis.

In the second century after Christ the period of the Second Sophistic began with the revival of Greek eloquence. Like their predecessors of the pre-Christian era these new sophists usually travelled and were overwhelmed with applause and other marks of distinction. They were professional orators who with great pomp delivered prepared or extempore declamations in public. During the second century they flourished and produced such men as Dion Chrysostom and Lucian. They appeared afresh

about the middle of the fourth century using their philosophic culture to defend paganism. Among these last sophists was John Chrysostom's rhetoric teacher, Libanius, the most celebrated pagan professor of the day. 4

To Puech and some other scholars Chrysostom the preacher appeared "as one of those who were the most completely detached from the civilization of antiquity." 5 Ameringer corrects this view by an imposing array of quotations from the treatises and sermons of Chrysostom; 6 and Fortescue highlights the great value of his classical schooling: "During these first years he acquired that skill in oratory that made him so famous; he learned to use the most perfect language in the world as a skilful workman uses a pliant tool, to persuade, frighten or rouse enthusiasm." 7

If John drew such rich and lasting fruits from the finest literature of antiquity, why did he not equal the ancient masters in every way? His failure to do so can be traced mainly to the sophistic doctrine of teachers and to the tastes of his


Both before and during his lifetime a movement was at work to revive Greek oratory by a close imitation of the Attic masters of expression, Demosthenes, Isocrates, Thucydides, Herodotus, Xenophon and Plato. But many sophists preferred the pompously ornate diction of Hippias and the Asiatic orators. The most striking feature of the later sophistic rhetoric is its artificiality. A subject appealed to a sophist solely in as far as it lent itself to rhetorical embellishment. Chrysostom detested the sophist brand of eloquence; for in their eager pursuit of oratorical display they put truth and virtue in second place. Nevertheless, in spite of Chrysostom’s purity of purpose and lofty ideals

the mannerisms of profane rhetoric had become, as it were, his second nature, so that, while he strove to avoid the grosser excesses of the oratory of show and display, he could not altogether eradicate intellectual habits that were deep-rooted and of long standing. This may be regrettable, but it is only the natural and logical result of his education and environment.

The second and supreme influence in his formation was Holy Scripture. As a little child he must have been introduced to the sacred writers by his religious and intelligent mother

8 Ameringer, The Stylistic Influence, 11, 13, 24-25,
During the six years which he spent as a monk he devoted much time and thought to the Bible. Almost every page of his treatises and sermons bears abundant witness to his esteem and profound knowledge of the Scriptures. His frequent quotations are woven into his discourses with such appropriateness that he seems habitually to fashion his thoughts in the words of divine revelation.

After his training under Libanius and before he took up an eremetical mode of life, he attended an asketerion, apparently a school for young men who were drawn toward religious life. A director of this asketerion was Diodorus, later bishop of Tarsus. This Diodorus was the founder of the Antiochene school of exposition which stressed the literal and historical meaning of the biblical text against the allegorical and mystical interpretation of Origen and the Alexandrian school. The commentaries of many Fathers and Doctors of the Church would have benefited greatly by a more frequent recourse to the approach of Diodorus rather than that of the more favored Origen. Chrysostom, for one retained

9 Puech, St. John Chrysostom, 10.
10 Attwater, St. John Chrysostom, 21, and D'Alton, Selections, 4.
the method of historical exegesis he had learned from his master and it is exemplified in all his commentaries on Holy Writ. He is by far the most prominent and successful exponent of the principles of the Antiochene school of exegesis. He shows his moderation by admitting allegorical interpretation when that seems to be suggested by the text. His example has been followed by almost all recent commentators on the Scriptures.

Chrysostom's preaching was constantly affected by his listeners. This is to be expected, for he spent his life among them. In him, however, this influence possessed added power because of his intimate contact with his hearers. The words of cardinal Newman, "I consider Chrysostom's charm to lie in his intimate sympathy and compassionateness for the whole world, not only in its strength, but in its weakness," are verified in the sayings of the Saint. Once when he had absented himself for a day, he exclaimed: "I have been separated from you for one day, but I was as uneasy and impatient as if my absence had lasted a whole year. And you know by what you felt yourselves, that I tell you the truth." At another time he explained the

11 Attwater, St. John Chrysostom, 16.
13 Puech, St. John Chrysostom, 40.
irregular arrangement of his sermons in this way: "If I treat of so many things in each of my sermons, if I vary them incessantly, it is because I desire that each person should have a special bit, that he should find his own spoil; and that no one should return home empty handed." 14

Although he always had an audience and usually a large one, his congregation must have confronted him with many a problem. "They were by nature a frivolous, volatile, though sensitive people, easily elated and easily depressed." 15 They were not only Greeks but Orientals who were delighted by "that clear and melodious preaching which led them ever softly on, and which could be understood without effort." 16 Consequently, they listened with intense pleasure even to strained metaphors and overly ornate phrases; for they prized sacred eloquence as much for its eloquence as for its sacredness. 17

In Book Five of the treatise On the Priesthood, which was most probably written before his ordination, Chrysostom showed that he was acquainted with the mentality of the people.

It is impossible that the whole audience should consist of persons of distinction; the majority of

14 Ibid., 41.
15 D'Alton, Selections, 8.
16 Gayré, Manuel of Patrology, I, 483.
17 Attwater, St. John Chrysostom, 31.
the faithful is made up of the uninstructed, while the rest are, it is true, more intelligent, but as far inferior in number to those who are capable of forming an opinion of a discourse as they themselves are fewer than the general body. Only one or two possess such capacity. 18

These facts make it easy to see that his schooling under sophists joined with his responsiveness to the tastes of Asiatic audiences made it almost inevitable that the defects of the rhetoric of his day, flowery exuberance and a marked tendency to exaggerate, would find a place in his style. 19

Nevertheless, even these flaws are palliated by the golden hues of his eloquence to such an extent that, if anyone should declare that he dislikes Chrysostom's sermons, he would be commenting on his own lack of discrimination; for virtually no critic has withheld from him a tribute of praise, and as they laud his ability, their words reflect the colors of his style.

Fortescue touches upon some qualities of Chrysostom's eloquence.

In splendida and sonorous Greek he produces his effect each time irresistibly. His flow of words is amazing; he adorns his speech with every ornament of rhetoric. Sometimes he is majestic and splendid, and then he suddenly


comes down to pleasant familiarity. He is indignant, and the sentences roll like thunder; he is pathetic, and it is all tears and woe. Or he argues subtly, persuasively, he pleads tenderly, he threatens awfully. He weaves chains of argument or paints pictures, teaches, exhorts and carries everyone with him up to some crashing climax.20

Montfaucon passes the following judgment on the sermons delivered during John's first year of preaching.

In his concionibus, etiam si inter primas quas Chrysostomus habuit numerentur, non modo eloquentiam, ubertatem in dicendo, nitidum genus verborum, et inventionis felicitatem admireris, quae in caeteris omnibus ejus operibus elucent, ubi styllum semper videmus populari assensioni accommodatum; sed etiam animadvertas quantum ad extemporaneam declamationem semper comparatus fuerit tantus artifex, et quas ad res quantumvis inopinatas stylo perseverandas praesto fuerit.21

Non-Catholics also, such as Philip Schaff, willingly proclaim the virtues of Chrysostom's style:

- the fulness of Scripture knowledge, the intense earnestness, the fruitfulness of illustration and application, the variation of topics, the command of language, the elegance and rhythmic flow of his Greek style, the dramatic vivacity, the quickness and ingenuity of his turns, and the magnetism of sympathy with his hearers. He knew how to draw in the easiest manner spiritual nourishment and lessons of practical wisdom from the Word of God, and to make it a divine voice of warning and comfort to every hearer.22

20 Fortescue, The Greek Fathers, 118.
It is Duebner, however, who expresses the effect of Chrysostom's eloquence in the tersest and most forceful way. He states his opinion in the preface to a volume of selections from Chrysostom.

De veterum aequae ac nostro sensu judicavimus auspicandum esse hunc Delectum ab aureo ore S. Joannis Chrysostomi, cujus orationem ipsius esse charitatis christianaee perenne flumen dicare; etiam profligando erigit et jacenti dat vires et alas. Quem qui semel gustavit, identidem ad eum fontem redibit; est enim Chrysostomus (si fas ita loqui) sancta Siren. 23

23 Fredericus Duebner, Sancti Joannis Chrysostomi Opera Selecta, Parisiis, 1861, I, v-vi.
CHAPTER III

GENERAL NORMS FOR PREACHERS

The facts and authorities which were advanced in the preceding chapters favor the conclusion of Rev. Patrick Boyle: "There have been in all ages eloquent preachers, but when all has been considered, it may be safely affirmed that St. John Chrysostom is the most eloquent, the most popular and most practical preacher that has ever flourished in the Church."¹

Therefore, it will be useful to discover what guiding beacons shone through the preaching career of Chrysostom. These could be culled from his sermons, but he has stated them in Books Four and Five of his work On the Priesthood.

This work is the finest of all Saint John Chrysostom's writings. It is the first really great pastoral work ever written, and it is the work of but a simple deacon, for it was composed probably between 381 and 385. Although the author had as yet no practical experience of the priestly ministry, he gives to priests wise and practical counsels couched in an excellent style, and at the same time speaks admirably of the greatness of the priest's mission.²

The treatise takes its beginning from the scheme of Chrysostom whereby he had his companion Basil made bishop

1 Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, xx.
requires visitation and inspection of the home "by the health department" before certification of the home.\textsuperscript{12}

Along with pre-licensing inspection of homes the states have, in varying ways, attempted to provide for periodic inspections. It will be recalled that in all of the eight states of this study the licenses for boarding homes are valid for one year only. At the end of that time the home reapplies for license and theoretically a review of the entire eligibility requirements takes place. It is certainly valid to question how thorough such a review can be in consideration of the volume of work this would entail particularly in regard to "independent foster homes" in which little or no contact has been carried on after the licensing of the home. It is easier to postulate that in boarding homes under the supervision of public or private agencies and in which regular visiting was part of the agency program, recertification might be more valid and effective. By and large it is noted that the terminology in the laws describing the function of investigation is broad and leaves to the agency actually carrying out the function a degree of flexibility in these matters. Each of the states has, however, incorporated certain ideas into its laws.

Both Connecticut and Rhode Island provide for "periodic investigation as shall safeguard the well being, health and

\textsuperscript{12}State of New Jersey, Department of Health, Code Guiding the Licensing and Conduct of Boarding Homes for Children, 1954, Section 2, item 2.4, p. 2.
most famous contemporary, is probably the best statement of these principles for the following reasons.

Book Four of the De Doctrina Christiana holds a unique position in the history of rhetoric. Within its few pages it contains a whole new and Christian approach to rhetoric. This art, which was the very life of ancient oratory, had degenerated by Augustine's day into the sterile and rimes of the so-called "second Sophistic." Although they professed to have Cicero as their master, rhetoricians had lost the true values of the ancient master of prose. It was left to Augustine to restore the pristine method and thought of Cicero's De Oratore. Cicero had used rhetoric for the purpose of giving truth to men. Augustine made the task of rhetoric the preaching of the word of God, Supreme Truth. Like Cicero he aimed first to teach (doere), but whereas Cicero had considered rhetoric's second aim to charm delectare, Augustine reserved that for last. Instead, he put in second place Cicero's third aim to influence to action (moveare). In addition, he made prayer a prime requisite of the Christian preacher, while eloquence was accorded a second place. He illustrated from Sacred Scripture the Christian orator's use of the three styles of speaking--submissum, temperatum, and grande. And finally, he laid down moral requisites for good preaching, namely, an exemplary life, truth before expression, and prayer which he regarded as the alpha and omega of the Christian's preparation.\footnote{Sister M. Melchior, O.P., "Saint Augustine, Student and Teacher," The Catholic Educational Review, III, May, 1954, 317.}

The oratorical norms proposed by Augustine can be fitingly applied to the Greek sermons of Chrysostom because Book Four of De Doctrina Christiana is a Christian adaptation of Cicero's oratorical theory which crystallized all that was most vital and lasting in Greek rhetoric. Besides, both Fathers
were opposed to the distortions of the new sophists. Almost every word in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* has a timelessness that makes it applicable even to the present day.

Augustine's purpose in Book Four of *De Doctrina Christiana* is to treat the manner of expressing thought. In the execution of this purpose he explains and illustrates by examples the essential qualities of an orator. These qualities in the order of their importance are wisdom, clearness, fittingness, charm, and technical perfection of language. These qualities are essential to any and all speakers. Cicero succinctly enumerates four of the five qualities in one short question. "Quinam dicendi est modus melior, quam ut Latine, ut plane, ut ornate, ut ad id quodcumque agetur, apte congruentereque dicamus?" At the very beginning of another oratorical work Cicero recognizes the great need of wisdom. "Ac me quidem diu cogitantem ratio ipsa in hanc potissimum sententiam ducit, ut existimem sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatis, eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obesse plerumque, prodesse numquam."

In Books Four and Five of the treatise *On the Priesthood* Chrysostom says much that agrees with the above principles

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5 Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 4, 1, 1.
6 Cicero, *De Cratorre*, 3, 10, 37.
7 Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1, 1, 1.
and nothing that is at variance with them. Throughout both books Chrysostom inculcates the supreme importance of wisdom. As he begins his treatment of the preacher’s duties, he asks:

How shall they whose office it is to take care of the body of Christ, which has to contend not against men, but against the invisible powers, how shall they preserve that body in health and vigor unless they are endowed with a virtue more than human, and are skilled in every useful method of healing the soul?  

He then shows that the preacher must be able to meet any attack; for "[a]s long as the prudence and intelligence of the pastor surround it [the city of God] on all sides as with a wall, all the machinations of the enemy turn to their own disgrace and confusion." In praise of St. Paul’s eloquence he says:

Even now he stands in our midst like a valiant athlete, bringing into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ, and destroying every height that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. All this he does by means of those admirable epistles, full of divine wisdom, which he has left us.  

He concludes Book Four by calling to mind the lasting damage which may be caused by a pastor who does not combine wisdom and eloquence.

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8 Chrysostom On the Priesthood, 91.
9 Ibid., 94
10 Ibid., 101.
When a dispute has arisen concerning doctrine, and all use the same scriptures in support of their contention, what help does a good life afford? Of what advantage are so many labours, if after so many toils, one falls into heresy through ignorance, and is cut off from the Church, a fate, which to my knowledge, has befallen many? What does an austere life avail him? Nothing. Just as soundness in faith is of no avail, if morals be corrupt. For these reasons it behooves him whose office it is to teach to be most of all skilled in argument. For though he himself stands secure and unharmed by the gainsayers, yet when the multitude of the simple faithful, who are subject to him, see their head overcome and unable to reply to his adversaries, they lay the blame of the defeat, not on his incapacity, but on the doctrine, as though it were unsound; and by the ignorance of one, the whole people are brought to utter ruin.\(^{11}\)

In Book Five Chrysostom explains why the preacher must have a right attitude toward praise and a talent for oratory. Such an attitude is both a sign of and a requisite for wisdom.

For five chapters (6-12) Augustine states and restates the indispensability of clearness. He summarizes his argument in the words of Cicero. "Docere necessitatis est, delectare suavitatis, flectere victorias."\(^{12}\) He then continues

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\(^{11}\) Ibid., 105-106.

\(^{12}\) Cicero, Orator, 21, 69. Cicero uses the word *probare* where Augustine has *docere*, but the basic meaning remains the same.
in his own words: "Horum trium quod primo loco positum est, hoc est docendi necessitas, in rebus est constituta quas dicimus; reliqua duo, in modo quo dicimus. Qui ergo dicit cum docere vult, quandiu non intelligitur, nondum se existimet dixisse quod vult ei quam vult docere."13

Although Chrysostom does not explicitly dwell on clearness to the same extent as Augustine, his repeated references to the preacher as primarily a teacher show that he realized its necessity. He grants a foremost place to clearness as he refutes those who claimed that St. Paul had admitted ignorance of oratory; he points out that St. Paul had called himself "rude in speech, but not in knowledge."14 Chrysostom then proceeds:

Were I looking for the smoothness of Isocrates, the strength of Demosthenes, the gravity of Thucydides, the sublimity of Plato, this testimony of Paul might be quoted. But I pass over all these qualities together with the exquisite ornament of profane writers, and I make no account of diction and delivery. Let a man be deficient in diction, and let his style be simple and plain, provided he is not ignorant in knowledge and in accuracy of doctrine.15

A plain and simple style and accuracy of doctrine are highly

13 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 4, 12, 27.
14 2 Cor. 11, 6.
conducive to clearness. Since divine truth has an intrinsic power of its own, it can accomplish much without extrinsic adornments; but it must be clearly proposed in order to be recognized as truth.

Augustine uses much of his comment on fittingness to prove that the style of sacred Scripture is eminently fitting. He sets forth a general principle while he speaks about the sacred authors.

Et audeo dicere omnes qui recte intellegunt quod illi loquuntur, simul intellegere non eos aliter loqui debuisses. Siout est enim quaedam eloquentia quae magis aetatem juvenilem decret, est quae senilem, nec iam dicenda est eloquentia, si personae non congruat eloquentis; ita est quaedam, quae viros summa auctoritate dignissimos planeque divinos decret. 16

Chrysostom declares that the preacher must readily adjust his oratory to the multiple facets of many and diverse problems. He does this by a comparison with military activity.

We have to prepare not for one kind of combat alone, but the warfare is manifold and waged by various enemies. They do not all use the same weapons nor the same method of attack. It behooves him who has to engage in conflict with all, to know the arts of all, and to be at once archer and slinger, brigadier and captain, soldier and general, foot-soldier and horseman, skilled in battles by sea and in besieging cities.17

16 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 4, 6, 9.
17 Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, 93.
He also employs examples to indicate the ever present need of eloquence adapted to all pertinent factors of a particular situation. "Of what advantage is it," he asks, "to fight nobly against the Gentiles if the Jews plunder the Church; or that both are conquered if the Manichaeans ravage it; or that all three are overcome if the Fatalists slaughter the sheep within the fold?" He soon advances to another example.

They again, who are infected with the frenzy of Sabellius, or the folly of Arius, have both lapsed from the sound faith, yet both bear the name of Christians. Now if their tenets be examined, it will be found that the former are no better than the Jews, differing from them only about names, and that the latter approach very near the heresy of Paul of Samosata, but that both are far from the truth. Here then there is great peril; the way is strait and rugged and bounded by precipices on either side, and there is no small reason to fear lest, while trying to strike one opponent, you be yourself wounded by the other. For if you say there is one Godhead, Sabellius will interpret the expression in his own sense. If you distinguish and say that the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are distinct, Arius presses on, and interprets the distinction of persons as diversity of nature. It is necessary therefore to avoid at the same time the impious confusion of the one and the foolish diversity of the other, confessing that the Godhead of Father and Son and Holy Ghost is one, but adding that there are three persons.19

18 Ibid., 94.
19 Ibid., 95.
Both Chrysostom and Augustine were resolutely opposed to the primacy which the sophists of their day gave to charm. These extremists had no personal and vital interest in their subject. It appealed to them in as far as it lent itself to rhetorical embellishment. Reacting against this attitude, Augustine asserts the utility of charm, but he carefully subordinates it to instruction and motivation. He says that "ut tensatur ad audiendum, delectandus auditor." He also affirms that the moderate style (genus temperatum), which aims primarily to please, can affect the practical views of the listeners. "Nam et laudes et vituperationes quando eloquenter dicuntur, cum sint in genere temperato, sic afficiunt quosdam, ut non solum in laudibus et vituperationibus eloquentia delectentur, verum et ipsi laudabiliter appetant fugiantque vituperabiliter vivere."  

When Chrysostom says in Book Five that the preacher must have contempt of praise and a talent for oratory, he regards charm as an important part of such talent; for he begins this book by observing that "many of the faithful are unwilling

21 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 4, 12, 27.
22 Ibid., 4, 24, 54.
to regard preachers in the light of teachers, but, outstepping the rank of learners, they assume the character of those who sit as spectators at profane theatrical displays. After a while he adds: "If a preacher despise praise, but does not teach doctrine 'seasoned with grace and salt,' he soon becomes contemptible to all and produces no fruit, notwithstanding his magnanimity." In his sermon "On the Obscurity of the Prophecies" he explains the purpose of oratorical ornament in sermons.

When we have the care of the sick, we must not set before them a meal prepared at haphazard, but a variety of dishes, so that the patient may choose what suits his taste. Thus we should proceed in the spiritual repasts. Since we are weak, the sermon must be varied and embellished; it must contain comparison, proofs, paraphrases, and the like, so that we may select what will profit our soul.

The fifth quality of an orator pertains to his language which, according to a Roman author, should possess elegance, arrangement and dignity. The same writer defines these requisites. "Elegantia est quae facit ut unumquodque pure et aperte dici videatur . . . . Compositio est verborum constructio quae facit omnes partes orationis æquabiliter perpolitas. . . .

24 Ibid., 108
25 Quoted by Ameringer, The Stylistic Influence, 28.
26 Rhet. ad C. Herenn., 4, 12, 17. In the Delphin Classics this work is given in the first volume of Cicero's Rhetorical works.
Dignitas est quae reddit ornatam orationem, varietate distinguens." 27 Augustine points out these aspects of language in the various passages which he quotes from Amos, St. Paul, St. Cyprian and St. Ambrose. Chrysostom makes no direct statement about perfection of language; its need, however, is implied in such assertions as: "The people are wont to listen not for profit, but for pleasure, just as if they had taken their seats as judges of the merit of actors or musicians; and the talent for oratory, which I have just now censured, has become a greater object of ambition than it is to the sophists in their contests." 28 The oratory of the sophists deserved censure because they took far greater pains about the beauty of words than about correctness of thought. Although Chrysostom put truth first, he did not neglect the more artistic requirements of oratory.

In an age when the Greek language was infected with the faults of the κόλαξ, he exhibited a remarkable purity of speech. An occasional word or phrase or construction may betray the fact that he was born in Asia and not in Attica, or that he belonged to a period of decline, but in general his standard of correctness was exceptionally high. . . . [N]o less a scholar than Wilamowitz-Moellendorff has declared that his style is 'der harmonische Ausdruck einer attischen Seele.' Another striking characteristic of Chrysostom is his wealth of appropriate language.

27 Ibid., 4, 12, 17 and 18; 4, 13, 18.
There are in fact few Greek prose writers whose dic-
tion is more copious.29

The theory which Chrysostom presents in Books Four and
Five of his treatise On the Priesthood accords with the best in
ancient oratorical thought. In these books, however his thoughts
are not centered on the five essential qualities of an orator
but on the four habits which should be found in the mind and
heart of the Christian preacher, namely, diligence in preparation,
exact knowledge of doctrine, purity of intention and indifference
to praise and envy.

The citations from Chrysostom's sermons which will be
given to demonstrate that he did possess the five essential
qualities of an orator will also bear witness to his diligence
in preparation and his exact knowledge of doctrine. His own
purity of intention and indifference to praise and envy is
revealed in various sermons. In his first sermon about Lazarus
he says: "The preacher ought to preach whether people listen to
him or not, just as water flows, although no one draws it."30
He had occasion to practice his preaching, for in spite of his
continual popularity the people neglected some of his most
fervent exhortations.31 In his homilies on the Acts of the

29 D'Alton, Selections, 33.
30 Chrysostom, De Lazaro, I; cited in Puech, St.
31 Baur, Chrysostomus und Seine Zeit, I, 196-205.
Apostles, which were delivered at Constantinople, he expresses his own habitual attitude in words which seem to be echoes from Moses and St. Paul.

If I were not afraid of being accused of vanity, I would show you the interior of my dwelling; you would see my tears when I behold your falls, my joy when I perceive your progress. Would to heaven that you might be saved, and that I should be accused of having ill fulfilled my duty rather than that I should see you perish, and myself receive testimony that I had neglected no means of saving you.32

To Chrysostom Augustine could rightly apply his terse description of the ideal orator. "Agit itaque noster iste eloquens, cum et iusta et sancta et bona dicit—neque enim alia debet dicere—agit ergo quantum potest cum ista dicit, ut intellegenter, ut libenter, ut obedienter audiatur."33

In the next chapter the occasion, contest and content of five sermons will be set forth. Then subsequent chapters will take up the five points of the oratorical theory which has been elucidated in this chapter and will contain significant examples in the use of each point from any or all of the five sermons.


33 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 4, 15, 32.
CHAPTER IV

CONTEXT AND CONTENT OF FIVE SERMONS

In February of 387, the year after Chrysostom's ordination, a large crowd at Antioch, angered by a special tax which the Emperor Theodosius I had imposed, tore the statues of the imperial family from their pedestals and dragged them through the streets. When the magistrates had stopped the riot by force, the people remembered the violent temper of their soldier-emperor; they feared that he would annihilate Antioch. The dread was increased as the governor of the city began to punish suspected offenders with torture and death. Flavian, the aged bishop, hastened to Constantinople to beg the Emperor for pardon. Chrysostom ascended the pulpit twenty-one times and by his sermons On the Statues poured solace and hope and courage into the hearts of the people.1

Flavian departed at the beginning of Lent. John, who had planned to comment on certain passages of the Old Testament,

1 Attwater, St. John Chrysostom, 38-40. The subject-matter of each of the twenty-one homilies can be found in St. John Chrysostom's Homilies on the Statues: a Study of Their Historical Qualities and Form, Sister Mary Albania Burns, S.N.D., Washington, D.C., 1930, 2-5.
often made allusions to recent happenings instead of treating the texts. "After he had consoled the despairing, he labored to reform them, scourged the current vices, especially that of making needless oaths, and unceasingly recalled the vanity of worldly possessions."²

Homily Seventeen was delivered after the arrival of Hellebichus and Caesarius, the imperial commissioners, who had been sent by Theodosius to investigate the overthrow of the statues and to punish the offenders.

John begins the homily by thanking God for preserving Antioch; he exhorts the people to continue the moderate conduct which many had adopted during the crisis; he describes how the monks came from their caves in the nearby hills to implore clemency from the commissioners or to die with the condemned citizens. He contrasts this self-sacrificing charity with the selfish fears of the aristocracy and pagan philosophers; he shows how these monks and the priests of the city persuaded the commissioners to suspend all penalties and to carry an appeal to Theodosius; he proves that Antioch is not harmed, but rather helped, as a result of the Emperor's closing the places of amusement and degrading the city from the dignity of a metropolis; for virtue makes a city noble. He asserts that Antioch is great

because here the disciples were first called Christians and an example of charity and integrity was given to the whole world. Finally, he urges them to pray for their imprisoned or exiled neighbors.

Since these twenty-one homilies were for the most part based upon a rapidly changing situation, there was little time for their immediate preparation. Nevertheless, these discourses are unparalleled in antiquity, and they captivated the people of Antioch. Puech aptly states the effect.

The crisis of 387 is decisive in the history of Chrysostom's preaching. It was that which revealed to his public, and perhaps to himself, the power of his eloquence, and all the effort of which his zeal was capable; it was that which established between himself and his public that sympathy which gave the one authority henceforth to say anything, and inclined the others to hear everything.

The seven panegyrics on St. Paul were given at Antioch, but the date is uncertain. They rank among the most celebrated sermons of Chrysostom. In St. Paul, John evidently saw "a kindred spirit, with much of his own fiery temperament, directness of speech, and impatience of the hypocrisy that masqueraded before the world in garb of virtue."

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3 Ibid.
4 Puech, St. John Chrysostom, 51-52.
5 Migne, P.G., L, 471.
7 D'Alton, Selections, 197; a summary of Chrysostom's encomia on St. Paul is given on pages 198-203.
The first panegyric makes it clear that Chrysostom admired St. Paul more than any other saint. He also sings his praises in many homilies, especially in those on the Pauline Epistles whenever he has cause to introduce the Apostle's name.8

In this first panegyric Chrysostom compares St. Paul with the greatest saints of the Old Testament, with John the Baptist and with the Angels. The keynote of the discourse is that St. Paul "possessed all the virtues found in all men and that in transcendent measure, yes, even those of all the angels." This remark also sets the tone of the sermon, which is hyperbole. Most of the panegyric is sufficiently moderate, but a tinge of hyperbole is imparted to the whole sermon because it is a development of the last quoted statement, which means, as the context indicates, that St. Paul in his one soul had the virtue of all men and angels and in a much higher degree. If this statement be taken literally, perhaps it cannot be applied to any creature except the Mother of God. It would, however, be a mistake to treat his hyperboles as scientific pronouncements. He was instructed by sophists, who in his day enjoyed great popularity as speakers. Therefore, even some of his wildest hyperboles would be heard with little or no criticism; for "it was a require

8 Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, 102, footnote.
ment of the sophistic eulogy that the merits of the hero be systematically magnified."10 Besides, in other passages of his writings where he touches on the excellences of St. Paul, he readily passes into the language of hyperbole."11

The homily on the Eighth Psalm is a popular commentary. Most of Chrysostom's sermons are explanations of parts of the Bible; taken together they form a complete commentary on the principal books, from the sixty-seven homilies on Genesis to the thirty-four on Hebrews.12 These homilies are not smoothly symmetrical and elegantly finished orations. Chrysostom explained each section of Scripture sentence by sentence. He would sometimes return to a passage which he had already treated if new aspects later occurred to him. At length he would usually take up some point of doctrine or practice which the text had directly or remotely suggested. Often enough he would wander off into the thoughts which welled up in rapid succession.13

10 Ameringer, The Stylistic Influence, 40.
11 D'Alton, Selections, 199.
12 Fortescue, The Greek Fathers, 125.
In general Chrysostom used the same informal, loosely knit method of exposition as the other Fathers; for their audiences did not require the system and symmetry of modern discourses; they preferred familiar and free addresses. He had, however, less recourse to allegorical explanations than the other Fathers did. He attempted to give a grammatico-historical exegesis and introduced allegory only where the sacred text suggested it. This approach, however, did not result in a merely factual interpretation; for he made his commentaries instruments in the moral reform of his listeners. In his homilies he almost always mingled two elements in varying proportions,

One portion exegetic and dogmatic in which the instruction seeks above all things to be simple, clear, intelligible to all, the other portion consisting of moral exhortation, familiar, urgent, topical. But in both the language bears the same stamp of efficaciousness; in every part we feel that the orator is close to his audience.

Chrysostom begins the homily on the Eighth Psalm by

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14 Ibid., IX, 18; the difference between Chrysostom's literal approach and the allegorical can be seen by comparing Chrysostom's commentary on the Eighth Psalm with Augustine's Enarratio on the same psalm - Migne, Patr. Latina, XXXVI, 109.

15 Puech, St. John Chrysostom, 40.
urging his congregation to lend at least as much attention to the sacred song as to a theatrical performance. On the first verse he bases a refutation of the Anomoeans who taught that men could comprehend the divine nature. Then with verse three as a foundation he spends most of the sermon in proving that the Jews had been dispersed throughout the world because they had crucified the Son of God. Next he briefly and impressively illustrates God's providential concern for men. He argues that after the primal sin God lessened men's power over brute creation in order to moderate their pride; he concludes by pointing out the errors of Paul of Samosata who said that Christ, even as far as His consubstantiality with the Father was concerned, began to exist when begotten by the Virgin Mary.

Chrysostom's homilies on the Psalms must be regarded as among his finest works both because of the profound ideas expressed in them and the beauty of their style. They date from the end of his career at Antioch. "The Homily against Drunkards and on the Resurrection" was delivered at Antioch on Easter Sunday not before the year 387. The exact date remains doubtful.

16 Cayré, Manual of Patrology, I, 480.
17 Tixeront, Handbook of Patrology, 203.
18 Migne, P.G., XLVII, 137.
Chrysostom begins by explaining the nature of true fasting. Then in graphic language he describes the repulsive effects of drunkenness. He tells his hearers to become inebriated with the Holy Spirit and the Blood of Christ. He reminds them that there is no distinction between rich and poor when they take part in the sacred mysteries. He explains why the resurrection of the body is a consequence of Christ's resurrection. He closes by inviting them to attend his sermon on each day of the paschal octave.

To many people the title of this sermon must appear strange. Why does Chrysostom spend the first half of an Easter sermon in preaching against drunkenness? Photius, who governed the Patriarchate of Constantinople four hundred and fifty years after him, provides the answer: "I am always full of admiration for that thrice-blessed man Chrysostom because his object is always the good of his hearers-- he puts all other matters almost or quite aside."19

Chrysostom knew the terrible ravages brought about by drunkenness. In half-pagan Antioch extreme cases of alcoholism must have been fairly numerous. Then as today men celebrated great feasts or holidays with generous outpouring of strong drink. Besides, at the end of Lent Chrysostom wanted to insist

19 Attwater, St. John Chrysostom, 47-48.
that Christians must fast from sinful extremes throughout the whole year.

"The Defense of Eutropius" must be viewed against its historical background. Theodosius I was the last Emperor to rule the entire Roman Empire. After his death (395) the Empire was divided between his two sons; the western part went to Honorius and the eastern to Arcadius. The famous monk St. Arsenius who had tutored these princes in their youth had retired into the desert of Skete to weep over the feebleness of Arcadius and the foolishness of Honorius. 20

Arcadius was so feeble that he never really ruled the Eastern Empire; for someone always had him under control. He soon fell under the sway of Eutropius, a eunuch who had spent most of his life as a slave. Eutropius, however, had worked his way up to the office of Grand Chamberlain; and played upon the weakness of Arcadius with such adroitness that he could do anything he desired. He had all prospective rivals forced into exile. He confiscated the property of his victims. He tried to take the right of sanctuary from the Church so that his enemies would have no place of refuge.

The Western Empire was angry and disgusted when the Emperor raised him to the dignity of patrician and named him

20 Ibid., 76.
Consul for the year 399. Chrysostom had been appointed Bishop of Constantinople chiefly through the influence of Eutropius; but they did not long remain friends. Chrysostom frequently denounced court luxury and extravagant public entertainments; and he resisted Eutropius' attempt to restrict by legislation the right of asylum in Christian churches. Eutropius, however, had offended powerful persons among whom were two Gothic generals in imperial service, and Arcadius' wife Eudoxia. When these demanded the deposition of Eutropius, the Emperor, according to his usual practice, yielded to the strongest pressure. Eutropius fled to the metropolitan church of Holy Wisdom, where his former opponent Chrysostom dared to stand against the almost universal desire for the eunuch's liquidation. 21 As the soldiers were about to seize Eutropius, John interposed with this firm declaration: "None shall violate the sanctuary save over my body: the Church is the bride of Christ Who has entrusted her honor to me and I will never betray it." 22 He persuaded Arcadius to respect the fallen minister's retreat in spite of objections from the soldiery.

The next day was Sunday and the church was filled to overflowing.

21 D'Alton, Selections, 268-274.
The Archbishop had just taken his seat in the 'Am-bon' or high reading desk a little westward of the chancel from which he was wont to preach on account of his diminutive stature and a sea of faces was upturned to him waiting for the stream of golden eloquence when the curtain of the sanctuary was drawn aside and disclosed the cowering form of the miserable Eutropius clinging to one of the columns of the Holy Table. Many a time had the Archbishop preached to unheeding ears on the vain and fleeting character of worldly honor, prosperity, luxury and wealth; now he would force attention, and drive home his lesson to the hearts of his vast congregation by pointing to a visible example of fallen grandeur in the poor wretch who lay graving behind him. 23

Chrysostom took as his text "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity." 24 He spoke movingly on the transitoriness of earthly glory; but the main burden of his discourse is a plea for forgiveness for one who had erred greatly. This sermon is probably the best known of all Chrysostom's discourses. Although it is often neglected in schools and in books pertaining to oratory, its intrinsic perfection is penetratingly summarized by Bishop D'Alton.

The discourse must have been rapidly composed, and shows what a ready eloquence he had at his command. In it we find a wonderful depth of pathos, a wealth of imagery, and an elevation of ideas that raise it at times to the level of a prose poem. Moreover,

23 Ibid.
24 Ecclesiastes, 1, 2.
the orator makes that scene in St. Sophia live for us, as if it was etched by a painter of consummate power. He brings us into an atmosphere that is tense with passionate hatred, and helps us to realise what a difficult task he set himself in his endeavour to elicit sympathy for the fallen minister. 25

25 D’Alton, Selections, 274.
CHAPTER V

WISDOM

In the treatise On the Priesthood Chrysostom points to the chief characteristic and mightiest motive of a wise preacher.

Let not the preacher, then, give heed to the praise of the people, nor lose heart if it fail him. But while he makes it the purpose of his discourse to please God -- for this and not the applause of men should be the guide and only aim of his best efforts -- should he be praised by men, let him not despise the praise, and should he receive no applause from his audience, let him not seek it, nor feel hurt. For to feel conscious that the aim and purpose of one's teaching has been to please God is a sufficient recompense for one's toil, and even the most valuable of all.¹

If a man always keeps this intention alive, he will shun envy, study Christian doctrine and constantly strive to make his sermons more efficacious. God will aid his efforts because He has called him to teach the divine law and life to men. Pure intention alone, however, does not manifest how wise a preacher is. Such a criterion is given by St. Augustine. "Sapienter autem dicit homo tanto magis vel minus, quanto in

¹ Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, 114.
scripturis sanctis magis minusve proficit. Non dico in eis multum legendis memoriaeque mandandis sed bene intellegendis et diligenter earum sensibus indagandis. . . . ."^2 He adds that, although an understanding of Scripture is far more important than verbal memorization, the best preacher both quotes it at will and understands it correctly.

According to this criterion, Chrysostom has few peers and almost no superiors, for his direct and indirect use of Scripture is extremely frequent and surprisingly appropriate. Even leisurely glances at his sermons reveal that they abound in Scriptural quotations. He had little time to prepare his "Defense of Eutropius," yet this short sermon contains eight explicit quotations from seven different books of the Bible. The sermon's two basic themes, the emptiness of earthly wealth and power and the plea for mercy, occur repeatedly in Holy Writ. The Seventeenth Homily on the Statues presents a similar example. Chrysostom had little opportunity to prepare this sermon, which contains at least eighteen references to various parts of Scripture.

It is easy to see that he knew and could readily quote Scripture; but how shall his deep understanding of the inspired word be proved? St. Augustine, using the words of St. Paul, provides the answer.

^2 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 4, 5, 7.
Legis et omnium divinarum Scripturarum plenitudo et finis est dilectio rei qua fruendum est [i.e. Dei] et rei quae nobiscum ea re frui potest [i.e. proximi]. . . . quisquis igitur Scripturas divinas vel quamlibet earum partem intellexisse sibi videtur, ita ut eo intellectu non aedificet istam geminam charitatem Dei et proximi, nondum intellexit. 3

Chrysostom's love for God and men finds warm expression in all his sermons. He begins his Seventeenth Homily on the Statues with glowing praise of God.

Most opportunely have we all this day sung together 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, the sole worker of wonders.' For marvellous and beyond all expectation are the things which have happened. A whole city and so great a population, when just about to be overwhelmed—to sink under the waves and be utterly and instantly destroyed—He has entirely rescued from shipwreck in a single moment of time. 4

He then urges his audience to a purer love for God.

Let us give thanks then, not only that God has calmed the tempest, but that he permitted it to take place; not only that He rescued us from shipwreck, but that He allowed us to fall into such distress, and such an extreme peril to hang over us. Thus also Paul bids us 'in every thing give thanks.' But when he says, 'in every thing give thanks,' he means not only in our deliverance from evils, but also at the time when we suffer those evils. For all things work together for good to those who love God. 5

At the end of this sermon he voices his loving concern for men.

3 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 1, 35, 39 and 1,36, 40.


5 Ibid.
Let us be continually thankful to God, as well for present as for past mercies; and call upon Him in common with all our might that those who now dwell in prison may be released, and that those who are about to be sent into exile may come back again. They too are our members. With us they have been tossed on the waves; with us they have withstood the storm. Let us, then, beseech the merciful God that with us they may enjoy the calm. Let no one say, 'What farther concerns me? I am freed from danger; let such a one perish; let another be destroyed.' Let us not provoke God by this indifference, but lament, as if we ourselves were in the same peril. So let us earnestly request God's help, carrying into practice that saying of Paul, 'Remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them; and those who suffer adversity, as being yourself also in the body; weeping also with those who weep; going along with the lowly.' This will also be of the greatest advantage to us; for nothing delights God so much as our readiness to mourn for our own members.

In the First Panegyric on St. Paul Chrysostom's love for God is heard as he explains why the angels are so highly regarded.

Just what is their title to greatness? They render God absolute obedience. Marveling at this, David exclaimed: 'You, mighty in strength who do His bidding.' Nothing equals this distinction, even though they be incorporeal to the ten-thousandth degree. The supreme cause of their happiness is that they obey God's commands, that in no way do they slight them.

At the very end of his panegyric, Chrysostom urges his hearers

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6 Ibid., 458.
7 Migne, P.G., L, 478; all quotations from the First Panegyric on St. Paul, the Homily on the Eighth Psalm and the Sermon on the Resurrection have been translated by the writer of this thesis.
to benefit by the wondrous example of St. Paul; for he is ever solicitous for the spiritual good of his fellow men. His words are:

It is astounding that such a man was on earth and clothed in a mortal body, while he was vying with incorporeal Powers. Therefore, how severe a condemnation shall we deserve, if after one man has taken to himself all virtues, we do not strive even on the lowest level to imitate him? With these thoughts in mind let us escape accusation, and strive to match his zeal so that we too may be able to gain the same blessings by the grace and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ to Whom be glory and dominion now and always and forever. Amen. 8

In the explanation of the first verse of the Eighth Psalm Chrysostom takes pleasure in praising the name of Jesus.

'How wonderful is your name.' For in this name death has been undone, demons bound, heaven opened, the gates of paradise thrown wide, the Spirit sent down; servants have become free men; enemies, sons; foreigners, heirs; men, angels. What do I say? angels? God has become man, and man has become God. 9

Chrysostom's delicate affection for both God and men can be perceived in his interpretation of the fifth verse which reads: "What is man that you are mindful of him? Or the son of man that you visit him?" After he has dealt with the first four verses of the psalm, he enters upon a beautiful description of God's providence for man and man's greatness as a result of divine care.

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8 Ibid.
For the things related in the previous verses also are on account of our race; and they pertain to God's sollicitude for us; for the whole of creation exists on account of man. But the Psalmist also takes up another aspect of providence. He does not simply launch into this subject; but he treats it very prudently, giving thanks for the wonderful care lavished upon man. For if he was nothing before, he was far less when Christ came, after so many terrible sins. The Prophet shows that Christ did not come without pardon; but that He came out of intense love for men. Like an expert physician, he left the healthy and came to us stricken men, though we were nothing. And so to show this he says: 'What is man?' in other words, 'He is nothing; he is something worthless.' For as he contemplates the tender providence and watchful sollicitude of God and the labors which He accomplished for mankind's salvation, he is greatly astonished and wonders why God deemed man worthy of so much attention. For consider that, because of man, the visible universe exists. Because of him were arranged all the events from the time of Adam to his coming; because of him are paradise and commandments and corrections and punishments and benefits after the Law. Because of him the Son of God became man. How could anyone recount the joys to be? Therefore, with these thoughts in mind, he says: 'How is man so important that he has been deemed worthy of such great blessing?' For if anyone should ponder how many stupendous things have been and are being done for man's sake, and what wondrous gifts he shall receive hereafter, he will be filled with profound awe; and then he will clearly see how much God cares about this living being.10

In the Sermon on the Resurrection Chrysostom forcefully unfolds the greatness of Christ's return to life. His simple words evidence a grateful esteem of the Savior's love and generosity.

10 Migne, P.G., IV, 116.
Let us celebrate this supreme and magnificent feast on which the Lord arose; and let us celebrate it both joyously and religiously. For the Lord has risen, and with Himself raised up the earth. He, Himself arose tearing apart the bonds of death. Adam sinned and died; Christ, however, did not sin, but He died. Here is a strange and surprising event. The former sinned and died; the latter did not sin, but died. For what reason? This happened so that the one who sinned and died would be able to escape from the clutches of death through the One Who did not sin but died. A similar situation occurs in financial matters. Often enough a person owes money and, because he cannot pay, is kept in jail. Another man who does not owe but can pay releases the debtor by making payment. The same thing was done in Adam's case. Adam owed; he was held by the devil but he could not pay. Christ did not owe and was not held by the devil; but He was able to pay the debt. He came; He liquidated death in favor of the devil's prisoner so that He might release him.11

In this same Easter sermon Chrysostom shows his deep sympathy for the feelings of the poor. He realizes that the needy are pained when they see others enjoy pleasures that are inaccessible to them. He is moved by compassion and assures his listeners that all men are equal at the Eucharistic table.

Let no poor man be downcast because of his poverty; for this feast is spiritual. Let no rich man be conceited because of his wealth; for he can contribute nothing from his purse to the pleasure of the feast. At external, worldly festivals where unmixed wine flows freely, where the table is laden and gluttons feast, where there is unseemly conduct and loud laughter, where full satanic pageant prevails, the poor man, of course, is downcast; but the rich man is joyous. Why so? The reason is that the rich man serves up a plentiful banquet and enjoys more delicacies; but the poor man is prevented by his poverty from displaying the same lavish expense.

11 Migne, P.G., L, 438.
Here, however, there is nothing of that sort. One table is for both rich and poor. Although a man be rich, he can add nothing to the table; and if he be poor, the benefits of the communal Sacrament are in no way diminished by poverty. For the favor is divine. 12

Chrysostom's unselfish tenderness is most obvious in his defense of Eutropius. The former consul had lost all his friends. The Empress, the army, the people were all against him because he had carelessly offended and harmed very many in his efforts to win and retain power. He had resented the Patriarch's warnings and had worked to repeal the right of Sanctuary. Nevertheless, when Chrysostom found him trembling before the altar, he saw in him only a child of God who needed protection from his raging enemies. He persuaded the weak Emperor to restrain the soldiers; then alone he faced the hostile crowd, and spoke to their hearts in accents of universal love. First he addresses Eutropius, asking him where his fairweather friends had gone; he answers his own question:

They have fled; they have disowned your friendship; they are providing for their own safety by means of your distress. But I do not act thus; no, in your misfortune I do not abandon you; and now when you are fallen, I protect and tend you. And the Church which you treated as an enemy has opened her bosom and received you into it. 13

Then Chrysostom, applying his remarks to benefit the whole assembly, continues:

12 Ibid., 436
And I say these things now not as trampling upon one who is prostrate, but from a desire to make those who are still standing more secure; not by way of irritating the sores of one who has been wounded, but rather to preserve in sound health those who have not yet been wounded; not by way of sinking one who is tossed by the waves, but as instructing those who are sailing with a favorable breeze so that they may not be overwhelmed.  

Chrysostom next depicts the dreadful calamity which reduced Eutropius to a state of dire terror. He concludes this description by saying:

Now I say these things not to reproach him or to insult his misfortune, but from a desire to soften your minds towards him, and to induce you to compassion, and to persuade you to be content with the punishment which has already been inflicted. For since there are many inhuman persons among us who are inclined, perhaps, to find fault with me for having admitted him to the sanctuary, I parade his sufferings from a desire to soften their hardheartedness by my narrative.  

The above passages show that the law of love which above all and in all is taught by the Sacred Scriptures held perpetual sway in the mind and heart of the Golden-mouthed Doctor. He was a preacher of a noble disposition who was able to check the people's inordinate and useless passion for entertainment from sermons. He directed their attention to what is more profitable and so led and controlled them without being himself the slave of their fancies. He merited to be called wise, because he was always telling his people by both word and

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14 Ibid., 250.
15 Ibid.
16 Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, 108.
example how necessary is the love for God and men and how this love can be lived in all the circumstances of mortal existence. His people realized hos worth. When he was appointed Bishop of Constantinople, he was secretly taken away from Antioch; and his selection was published in Antioch after he had reached the capital city. This was done because every one knew that the people of Antioch would never willingly allow Chrysostom to leave. When he was exiled for the first time, the people of Constantinople were ready to hinder his departure by force. Just before his second exile, when attempts had been made on his life, the people guarded his episcopal palace day and night. Chrysostom practiced his own preaching to the last second of his life. After all the sufferings of his long exile, his last words were: "Δόξα τῷ Θεῷ πάντων ἐν εἰκεν." 17

18 Ibid., 224.
19 Ibid., 250.
20 Ibid., 357
CHAPTER VI

CLARITY

If a preacher lacks wisdom, his words are dangerous; if he lacks clarity, his words are at best useless. Aristotle says: "Style to be good must be clear, as is proved by the fact that speech which fails to convey a plain meaning will fail to do just what speech has to do." 1 Since the prime purpose of Christian preaching is to impart divine truth, Augustine exhorts the preacher to sacrifice even grammatical correctness if such correctness would hinder the audience from easy comprehension. "utetur etiam verbis minus integris, dum tamen res ipsa doceatur atque discatur integre." 2

Even though Chrysostom made no explicit reference to clarity in his treatise On the Priesthood, his sermons show that he accepted the same principle as Aristotle and Augustine. Since Chrysostom believed that a priest should preach in order

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2 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 4, 10, 24.
to improve his audience, he was careful to make his message intelligible. The opening of the sermon on the Resurrection is a model of clearness which is not marred but rather heightened by metaphor and paradox.

We have put away the burden of fasting, but let us not put away the fruit of fasting; for we can put away the burden of fasting and continue to pluck the fruit of fasting. The hardship of the contests has passed by, but may earnest striving after right conduct not pass by; fasting has gone away, but may godliness remain; but no, not even fasting has gone away. Yet do not be afraid; I did not say this to proclaim another Lent, but to return to the same virtue. The bodily fast has passed by, but the spiritual fast has not passed by; the spiritual fast is better than the bodily and the bodily fast is undergone because of the spiritual. Just as when you were fasting I kept telling you that it is possible to fast without fasting, so now also I tell you that it is possible not to fast while fasting. Perhaps this sounds like a riddle, but I shall provide the solution. How is it possible to fast without fasting? By abstaining from foods, but not from sins. How is it possible not to fast while fasting? By enjoying food, but not tasting sin. This fast is better than the other, and not only better, but also easier.

In the above quotation Chrysostom says that the one purpose of fasting is to eliminate sin. This idea is expressed in many different ways; bodily observance is repeatedly compared and contrasted with spiritual purpose and result; a certain element of mild fear is introduced. The central thought is explicitly

4 Migne, P.G., L, 433.
stated, "the bodily fast is undergone because of the spiritual," Finally a riddle and its solution is used to imprint the idea vividly upon the minds and memories of the hearers. With Augustine Chrysostom fully realized that "non solum in collocutionibus, sive fiant cum aliquo uno, sive cum pluribus, verum etiam multo magis in populis quando sermo promit, ut intellegamur instandum est." Chrysostom uses frequent repetition, but always "multimoda varietate dicendi." The second statement of an idea differs at least slightly from the first statement. The preceding quotation also indicates that Chrysostom understood and practiced Aristotle's direction, "Clearness is secured by using the words (nouns and verbs alike) that are current and ordinary."

Repetition couched in ordinary words and seasoned with variety is found in his lengthy refutation of Jewish blasphemies which occupies the greater part of his homily on the Eighth Psalm.

And if you ask them, 'Why did you crucify Christ?' they say, 'Because He was an imposter and a sorcerer.' In return, then, for this act you ought to have been honored and your territory enlarged because you had pleased God. For the one who destroyed an impious sorcerer and impostor destroyed an enemy of God; and he who destroyed an enemy would justly be held in esteem. Now Phineas, because he had killed one harlot, was considered worthy of the priesthood and such great honor; but you who deserve far more esteem, if you really destroyed an imposter, go around in every direction without any fixed home or city. Therefore, you have borne these sufferings for no other reason than that you crucified a protector, benefactor and

5 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 4, 10, 25.  
6 Ibid.  
7 Aristotle, Rhetorica, 3, 2, 1404b.
teacher of truth. For if he was an imposter and opponent of God, and if, although not God, he wished to be God and drew to Himself the reverence due to the Father, you ought to have enjoyed higher esteem than Phinees and Samuel and all men of that type because you had displayed such enthusiasm for the Law. Now, however, you have been undergoing sufferings such as you never underwent in the past when you worshiped idols, lived godlessly and murdered your own children; nor is there any release from evils. As wanderers, exiles and vagabonds you traverse land and sea under the bondage of Roman law; you move from place to place without any definite city or home, enslaved, excluded from freedom and your fatherland and priesthood and all prerogatives of bygone days, dispersed in the midst of barbarians and countless nations, hated by all men, loathsome, exposed to injury from all sides. So it is. For you have not received rewards because you killed the enemy of God. Such talk is madness and nonsense. Your present sufferings befit not the slayers of God's enemy, but the destroyers of His friends.8

The predominant idea of the preceding quotation is that the Jews were suffering because they had crucified the Son of God. Throughout many more paragraphs Chrysostom continued to set forth this same theme. His variety of structure, diction and exposition ensures complete lucidity and guards against monotony.

Another type of repetition is seen in his explanation of the third verse of the Eighth Psalm where the six sentences can be divided into pairs in which the second part repeats or refers back to the first part. The verse reads: Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings you have perfected praise." Chrysostom then interprets: "This statement means: You especially manifest

8 Migne, P.G., LV, 110.
Your might by stirring into action unwarlike forces and by making the faltering tongue distinct in that song of praise."9 He renders his meaning more explicit by telling to what this saying of the Psalmist referred. "For he predicts that hymn of praise which the children uttered in the temple." Next he asks why this sign was chosen in preference to any other. "And just why did he pass by the other marvels, the raising of the dead, the cleansing of lepers, the expulsion of demons, but mention the wonder of the children?" The answer is then given. "Because all those things had been done before this, though not in the same way; nevertheless, they had been done, and there was some common note, though not in the manner." Chrysostom concludes this phase of the explanation by enumerating specific examples. "For a dead man was raised to life in the time of Eliseus and a leper was cleansed, and in the time of David a demon was driven out when Saul was possessed; but a chorus of suckling babes spoke now for the first time." He then emphasizes the significance of these examples. "So that the Jews might not shamelessly claim that this prophecy had been spoken about men in the Old Testament, he chose a sign which happened then for the first and only time."

In this exegetic sermon Chrysostom uses every means to make his thoughts clear to his audience. He begins by indicating

9 Ibid., 108.
the connection between the Seventh and the Eighth Psalms. "In the previous Psalm he [the Psalmist] said: 'I will praise the Lord for His justice and I will sing to the name of the Lord, the Most High.' Here he fulfills his promise by offering a song to Him. In the preceding Psalm the thoughts are spoken as by one person. For he says: 'Lord, my God, in You have I hoped; save me.' But here as by many persons; for he says: 'Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Your name.'

This explanation is not a formal course in biblical hermeneutics; it is a correct interpretation which is intended to help the people in their daily lives. Chrysostom talks about the Arian Anomeans and the followers of Paul of Samosata because these heretics were active in Antioch. Chrysostom spends the greater part of the sermon in exposing the falsehoods of the Jews, because Christians were being led astray by the Jews who inhabited Antioch in large numbers.

His examples are taken from the people's environment; his mentality was far different from that of the sophists who considered themes taken from the life of the times as trivial and commonplace. His love for his flock caused him to make

10 Migne, P.G., LV, 106.

11 Baur, Chrysostomus und Seine Zeit, I, 35.
12 Ibid., 273-275.
their interests his own. His vocabulary was rich and varied, but he rarely employed unusual words. 14

Nothing in him savors of the rhetorician or the student. In his discourses there is very little philosophy or abstract reasoning, but much illustration, comparison and popular argument. As he knows the life of his people thoroughly, his descriptions of customs and habits have nothing artificial or unnatural about them. Here is a father who converses with his children, and who instructs, corrects and encourages them without reserve. 15

Chrysostom's desire to benefit his people resulted in sermons clear enough to be understood at the first hearing and profound enough to provide added instruction and pleasure at subsequent readings. The mixed crowds who flocked to him during his preaching career are evidence of his lucidity; the preservation of his prolific works implies that his wisdom was not quickly exhausted.

14 Migne, P.G., 107, footnote.
CHAPTER VII

FITTINGNESS

Just as a preacher's wisdom is of little profit to others unless it is clearly expressed, so lucid expression is hardly possible unless the discourse is adapted to the audience. "Perspicuus autem sermo est, qui ab iis, ad quos loquimur, plene, accurate, et facile intelligitur. Quapropter non idem sermo apud omnes eadem in re planus aut obscurus est."\(^1\)

In Book Four of his treatise *On the Priesthood* Chrysostom compares medical doctors with the priests who tend the mystical body of Christ in order to show how many problems must be solved by the one instrument of preaching.

The physicians of the body have at their disposal a variety of medicines, different sorts of instruments, a regimen adapted to the patient; and the quality of the air is sometimes of itself sufficient to cure the invalid. Sometimes, too, sleep coming on opportunely relieves the physician of all anxiety. Here, however, no such means can be devised; but after good example there is but one instrument and means of healing; that is preaching. This is the instrument, this the regimen, this the salubrious climate; this serves as medicine as fire and knife. If it be necessary to burn or to cut, this must be used, and if it fail, all the rest is useless. By means of this, we raise up

\(^1\) Iosephus Kleutgen, *Ars Dicendi*, Augustae Taurinorum, 1898, 9.
the soul when prostrate, and cool it when fevered, and cut off what is superfluous, and fill up deficiencies, and do everything else which contributes to the health of the soul.  

Since so many different results must be achieved through preaching, a sermon must be carefully directed to a definite goal; otherwise the preacher will be less successful than the hunter who fires his gun wildly into the air. Chrysostom had to give special attention to fittingness because he counseled men in their practical lives. No other Greek ecclesiastical writer dedicated his works so largely to asceticism and morality as Chrysostom did.  

St. Isidore of Seville aptly put the following verse upon Chrysostom's lips.

"Composui mores; virtutum praemia dixi; et docui miseros crimina flere reos."  

A modern scholar gives a similar but fuller statement in prose.

Moral teaching is always the end and nearly always the main subject of Saint John Chrysostom. His intention was to submit the whole of man, the individual, the family, society to the Christian law. In the fourth century manners and conduct were still feeling the effects of Paganism. As yet they had not been entirely changed by the Church. At that time the moralist had also to be a reformer. At Antioch, Chrysostom found his task easy. At Constantinople, he met with a powerful and tenacious opposition which broke him in the long run. But no matter how difficult and dangerous his task, John never flinched from carrying it through.

4 Migne, Patr. Latina, 83, 1109.  
5 Cayré, Manual of Patrology, I, 466.
Chrysostom seems to have possessed a marvelous ease in deciding what was to be said for the benefit of his audience. When the imperial statues had been overthrown at Antioch, he realized that the populace would be more receptive than usual to spiritual lessons because they feared that death was imminent. Therefore, in his seventeenth homily he urged the people to give thanks to God not only for release from hardship but also for the hardship itself. At this time the people knew that the greatest danger had passed, but the Emperor had not made his final decision. Chrysostom delivered a long and vivid encomium on the monks who had pleaded with the commissioners to spare the people. He did so to impress the spirit of the monks upon his hearers' minds and to expose by contrast the utter falsity of the pagan philosophers who were still trying to win back the Empire for the gods. The sermon is full of consolation; but the words of solace are used to raise hearts to eternal values. The most popular places of amusement had been closed; Chrysostom reminded the people that these places had been notorious occasions of sin. Antioch had been despoiled of its metropolitan dignity; John seized the chance to prove that virtue alone makes a city great. His words vibrate with realism and inspiration.

If you are a Christian, no earthly city is yours. Of our city 'the Builder and Maker is God.' Though we may gain possession of the whole world, we are but strangers and sojourners in it all. We are enrolled in heaven; our citizenship is there. Let us not af-
ter the manner of little children, despise things that are great and admire those which are little.
Not our city's greatness, but virtue of soul is our ornament and defense. If you suppose dignity to belong to a city, think how many persons must partake in this dignity, who are fornicators, effeminate, depraved and full of ten thousand evils and at last despise such honor. But that City above is not of this kind; for it is impossible that he can be a partaker of it who has not exhibited every virtue.6

Freely but sincerely Chrysostom bestowed praise on the Emperor Theodosius, on the monks, on the city's priests, on the commissioners, on the populace; he knew that honest praise can be a potent stimulus to a better life.

The First Panegyric on St. Paul may at first sight appear to be little more than a Christian eulogy in the sophistic vein. At the beginning, however, Chrysostom clearly implies that he is lauding St. Paul as a model for his listeners. He asserts that each day St. Paul pours forth many rivers which arouse the souls of men to bear the fruits of virtue.7 Chrysostom stresses the universal aspects of Paul's wonderful life. He says that Paul offered himself on each day to God, that he died daily to himself, and bore mortification in his body without ceasing, that he pulled out the thorns of sin and sowed the word of godliness, that he made the love of Jesus the sole object of

7 Migne, P.G., L, 473.
of his quest. At the end he openly urges his hearers to imitate in some small way the Apostle of the Gentiles. Since Chrysostom had presented the Apostle's basic virtues rather than individual and extraordinary feats, he was able to exhort his people to a proportionate imitation. He fitted the eulogy to their needs.

In most of Chrysostom's sermons two parts can easily be distinguished:

In the first he instructs by means of the Scriptures; he is the catechist, that is to say a professor of elementary dogmatic and general moral theology. In the second he shows his hearers how to apply the principle, policing consciences according to their needs. The connecting link between these two parts is often frail enough, and in certain cases there exists no other reason than the immediate need of the faithful... 8

In the sermon on the Resurrection many topics are treated which seem quite disparate. First Chrysostom explains the true nature of fasting. Then he exhorts the faithful to abstain from excessive drink. He next points out that poor and rich are on the same level when they participate in the divine mysteries. Finally he proclaims the glory of Christ's Resurrection and indicates why the bodies of the just must share in the Resurrection. Since Chrysostom's guide was the utility of his audience, he made his general pattern conform to their

8 Cayré, Manual of Patrology, I, 482.
requirements. There is a real but somewhat loose unity in this Easter sermon. The basic idea is a contrast between sinful intoxication and holy inebriation of spirit. The first half of the sermon dramatises the horrible effects of bodily inebriation; the second half glorifies the consequences of spiritual inebriation. With such a double approach Chrysostom provided unusually strong motivation at a time when the inclination to drink is unusually strong; and once again he used an earthly vice as an occasion for elevating the hearts of the people to heavenly truths.

A reader of the homily on the Eighth Psalm may wonder whether Chrysostom spoke too long. The fact that most of his sermons were considerably longer than the ordinary sermons of today can be ascertained by rapidly paging through his collected works. Length, however, detracted little or nothing from the efficaciousness of his sermons.

Chrysostom has something of Asiatic prolixity, due to the very richness of his oratorical vein as well as to the style adopted in his discourses. As these ordinarily have in view the explanation of a part of the Scripture, topics were never lacking, and the orator stopped only when he thought fit. This is why we must refrain from passing criticism upon the sermons of St. Chrysostom according to our Western and Latin criteria. Judged by our rules these sermons lack unity and proportion; several subjects are treated in the same discourse, and the discourses are too long. St. Chrysostom’s hearers were not repelled by these defects, but followed without fatigue that harmonious and clear language.
which carried them softly onwards without burdening their minds.

Aristotle remarks that style must be appropriate, avoiding both meanness and undue elevation.\textsuperscript{10} Chrysostom's ardent love for his priestly work excluded all meanness from his style. He considered nothing trivial which affected the service of God. Sometimes, however, his very ardor swept him into an imperfect use of the elevated style. Almost all of the First Panegyric on St. Paul is given in a superlative mood. The sermon abounds in such sayings as "What speech will be adequate for his merits; or what tongue will be able to equal his praiseworthy deeds?" and "What could be equal to this sacrifice which, after drawing the sword of the Spirit, he immolated, which he offered on the altar above in heaven?\textsuperscript{11} The sublimity of St. Paul's virtue does surpass expression, but this sermon fails to produce the intended emphasis, because a marked intensity is unrelentingly maintained throughout the whole. Chrysostom wanted to arouse admiration for St. Paul; but his enthusiasm here caused him to overlook the fact that "in potestate est eloquentis ut dicantur nonnulla submisse, etiam quae possent granditer dici,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Tixeront, \textit{Handbook of Patrology}, 202.
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Aristotle, \textit{Rhetorica}, 3, 2, 1404b.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Migne, \textit{P.G.}, L, 473 and 474.
\end{itemize}
ut ea quae dicuntur granditer, ex illorum fiant comparatione grandiora, et eorum tamquam umbris luminosiora reddantur."\(^{12}\)

This panegyric is the only sermon out of the five under discussion in which such a defect occurs. Sophistic influence shows itself more in panegyrics, because the rhetors of that time favored this type of address which allowed the fullest display of rhetorical resources.\(^{13}\) Besides, the comparison of an imposing personality, such as St. Paul is, with the best men of the Old Testament inclined the speaker to a consistent use of emphatic terms. Nevertheless, Chrysostom demonstrated his reserve power as he neared the end; for the comparison with the angels is the most striking part of the sermon.

Chrysostom's habitual skill in saying the right thing at the right time and in the right way made him the people's preacher.

His eloquence, for all its splendor, was for the most part characterised by a clearness and simplicity that must have brought it well within the compass of the lowliest of his hearers. . . . They were by nature a frivolous, volatile, though sensitive people, subject to quickly changing moods, easily elated and easily depressed. . . . He likens them to the young of the swallow waiting for their food, and declares that in no other city can be found so ardent a longing for the word of God, though

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12 Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 4, 23, 52.

he must have realised that this was in large measure due to the magnetism of his own personality. Rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were eager to hear him, and all yielded to the spell of his eloquence. . . . One might say that no orator established closer contact with his audience. 14

14 D'Alton, Selections, 8-9.
CHAPTER VIII

CHARM

A speaker whose chief concern is his own popularity will subordinate all aspects of his oratory to the production of pleasing discourses. Such men were the orators of the Second Sophistic; such men are many of the modern politicians. About this type of purpose (finis) Augustine says: "Appetant eum qui lingua gloriantur, et se in panegyricis talibusque dictionibus iactant, ubi nec docendus nec ad aliquid agendum movendus, sed tantummodo est delectandus auditor."¹ The Christian orator uses charm to teach and to persuade his audience. Some measure of stylistic ornament is not only helpful to the instructor and the preacher, but in most cases it is necessary. Augustine gives the reason. "[q]uoniam inter se habent non-nullam similitudinem vescentes atque discentes, propter fastidia plurimorum, etiam ipsa sine quibus vivi non potest alimenta conienda sunt."²

Chrysostom excels in charm. His other qualities

¹ Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, 4, 25, 55.
² Ibid., 4, 11, 26.
are equalled or surpassed by other great men, but no Christian orator has ever used such abundant ornamentation with such pleasing effects as Chrysostom. Everywhere he seemed to look for ways of making his sermons more attractive. "Like many orators from Asia, he had a great gift for extempore speaking. At such times he depended for his effect, not so much on the logical development of his theme, as on the striking phrase or vivid image that could focus the attention of his audience and communicate to it something of his own enthusiasm." Most of his addresses, however, seem to have been carefully prepared. In all of his sermons he acted as a painter who was eager to beautify his lessons so that they would be more useful.

Ornament would be expected in panegyrics and festive discourses, but it is also used throughout such an explanatory sermon as the Homily on the Eighth Psalm. At the very beginning, Chrysostom catches the attention of his hearers by a vivid description of that type of musical entertainment to which they were only too addicted. He then describes the psalm in metaphors taken from song and dance.


4 D'Alton, Selections, 35.
Now maintain silence and listen carefully. For if, in the theater, when diabolic choruses are singing, there is deep silence so that those deadly songs may be heard, although they are the songs of a chorus composed of mimes and male dancers under the lead of some profane harper, though an impure and wicked demon is celebrated to the strains of pernicious and satanic song, is it not then proper that you keep perfect silence and listen with reverence here where the chorus is composed of holy men, the leader is the Prophet, the song is not from diabolic activity but from spiritual grace; the theme is not a demon, but God? We have become the fellow choristers of the Powers above; for the choirs above and the Cherubim and Seraphim also have this task, the continuous singing of God's praises.\(^5\)

Since the audience could not picture for themselves these invisible spirits, Chrysostom adds a reference to the chorus of angels at Christ's birth. "Out of these choirs they also appeared upon the earth singing with the watching shepherds." Under the form of another comparison he offers the audience a second motive for paying heed to the Psalm.

Those who praise an earthly king converse with him about empire, about trophies, about victory; they recall the nations overpowered by him; and they call him destroyer and conqueror of barbarians, and similar names. This blessed man likewise sings a song of this sort; for he tells of a victory and a trophy and the termination of wars, not of the same kind but far more difficult ones.\(^6\)

By this time Chrysostom has centered the minds of his listeners on the Psalm he is about to explain. His opening was

\(^5\) Migne, P.G., LV, 106.

\(^6\) Ibid., 106-107.
colorful and varied. He then points out that God is their Lord, both because He made them from nothing and because He is acknowledge by them. After he has described how wonderful is the name and nature of the Lord, he recounts in a series of metaphors the effects of Christ's redemptive mission. "The partition-wall was taken away; the fence was destroyed; the divided were joined together; the darkness was quelled; the light shone forth; death was swallowed up." After his initial admonition Chrysostom had no need to urge his hearers to silence again, even though the homily was lengthy. The apt comparisons, the vigorous metaphors, the abundance of appropriate scriptural quotations, the frequent but smooth changes in sentence structure and the ready intelligibility of arguments made the audience glad to listen.

The Seventeenth Homily on the Statues contains lifelike portrayals of the monks' descent and intervention, of the mother of an accused person, of the priests' pleading with the commissioners. Chrysostom was able to introduce a touch of poetic beauty even into an enumeration of things.

When you wish to pronounce an encomium on the city, tell me not of the suburb of Daphne, nor of the height and multitude of its cypresses, nor of its fountains of waters, nor of the great population who inhabit the city, nor of the great freedom with which its market-place is frequented even to mid-

7 Ibid., 107.
night, nor of the abundance of its wares. All these are things of the outward sense and remain only as long as the present life.

Chrysostom's eloquence was usually natural and unforced. He makes us conscious of an earnestness and sincerity that disdain to employ the trappings of rhetoric for mere display. Sometimes, however, his use of decorative devices is marred by excess or bad taste. This happened most frequently in panegyrics.

There we find elaborate periods, and artificial figures such as the 'Gorgianic,' that became so intimately associated with 'Asianism,' and are so apt to become obtrusive unless they are employed with economy. Paradox, hyperbole, climax, even the jingles of assonance and alliteration, are often indeed used with telling effect, but are sometimes carried to excess. Metaphors and similes crowd thick and fast upon his pages, and are occasionally of so daring a character as to transgress the limits of good taste. At times, indeed, in his descriptions we witness a veritable riot of the imagination.

Ameringer points out a transgression of good taste which occurs in the First Panegyric on St. Paul. "The labored ingenuity of the rhetor is revealed in a far-fetched metaphor on St. Paul. . . . He is described in a contrast with Noe as saving the whole world in an ark which he constructed out of his epistles, using them instead of planks." ¹⁰

The zenith of Chrysostom's ornamental power is seen

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9 D'Alton, Selections, 54.
in the Defense of Eutropius and especially in the dramatic opening when he exclaims:

It is always in season but now more than ever is it seasonable to say: Vanity of vanities and all is vanity. . . . Where is the gay torchlight now; Where are the clapping hands and the dances and the assemblies and the festivals? Where the green garlands and the curtains floating? Where the cry of the town and the cheers of the hippodrome, and the noisy flattering lungs of the spectators there? All that is gone; a wind blew and on the sudden cast the leaves, and shewed us the tree bare and all that was left of it from the root upwards shaking—the gale that struck it was so fearfully strong and threatened, indeed, to tear it up root-whole, or shatter it this way and that, even to the rending of the grain of the timber. Where now are the friends, the make-believes, followers of the fashion? Where the suppers and feasts? Where the swarm of hangers-on? The strong wine decanting all day long, the cocks and the daintily dressed table, the attendants on greatness and all the words and ways they have to please? They were all night and dreaming; now it is day and they are vanished. They were spring flowers, and, spring over, they all are faded together. They were a shadow, and it has travelled on beyond. They were smoke, and it has gone out in the air. They were bubbles, and are broken. They were cobweb, and are swept away. And so this spiritual refrain is left up to sing, coming in again and again with: Vanity of vanities and all is vanity.11

Ameringer comments on both the strength and the weakness of this opening.

Never was the emptiness of human glory driven home with more telling force. The cry, "Vanity of vanities," comes like a natural refrain at the close of this pathetic dirge. The allegory of the tree graphically portrays the forlorn state of the wretched Eutropius. However, the power and beauty of this

grand passage, are impaired by that besetting fault
of Chrysostom's style, an oriental profusion of im-
ages. Seven metaphors, couched in six short clauses
of parallel structure with homoloteleuta, follow one
another in quick succession. This is Asiatic oratory
in its highest development.\(^2\)

D'Alton with greater insight mentions and explains
the real and apparent flaws found in the embellishments of the
entire sermon.

We find at times in this first discourse on Eutro-
pius an almost wild profusion of metaphor, a hardi-
hood of expression, and a love of obtrusive figures,
that proclaim how strongly he had been influenced
by his rhetorical training under Libanius. We must
remember, however, that he was appealing to an ori-
ental audience that loved the glitter of ornate elo-
oquence. It is easy, too, when we no longer hear
the orator's living voice, and when the 'incendia
animorum' have died down, to criticise a venture-
some word or phrase that would have seemed appropri-
ate at an inspired moment, and in its proper set-
ting. We have here rhetorical ornament in abundance,
but the speaker's lofty ideals and passionate sin-
cerity generally succeed in fusing it into harmony
with his own mood and purpose.\(^3\)

Chrysostom's charm is externalized through brilliant
and usually alluring figures of speech and sound; many others,
however, have used such figures in lavish profusion and yet have
failed to approach the magnetic eloquence of the Golden-mouth.
The secret of his charm is not discovered in treatises on rhet-
oric, nor can it be mastered merely by imitating his luxuriant
phrases. A preacher's power must spring from his own soul; this

\(^3\) D'Alton, *Selections*, 274.
is why Chrysostom in his treatise *On the Priesthood* discusses the habitual attitudes of a preacher rather than salient points of rhetoric. The secret of Chrysostom's charm is revealed by Cardinal Newman.

That charm lies . . . in his habit and his power of throwing himself into the minds of others, of imagining with exactness and with sympathy circumstances or scenes which were not before him, and of bringing out what he has apprehended in words as direct and vivid as the apprehension. His page is like the table of a *camera lucida*, which represents to us the living action and interaction of all that goes on around us. That loving scrutiny, with which he follows the Apostles as they reveal themselves to us in their writings, he practises in various ways towards all men, living and dead, high and low, those whom he admires and those whom he weeps over. He writes as one who was ever looking out with sharp but kind eyes upon the world of men and their history; and hence he has always something to produce about them, new or old, to the purpose of his argument, whether from books or from the experience of life. Head and heart were full to overflowing with a stream of mingled 'wine and milk,' of rich vigorous thought and affectionate feeling.  

CHAPTER IX

PERFECTION OF LANGUAGE

The traditional requisites of an orator's language were *elegantia*, *compositio* and *dignitas*. Elegance includes purity and precision. Purity requires that all the speaker's expressions belong to the idiom of his language. Chrysostom possessed a clear, penetrating and lively mind, which enabled him nearly always to render his ideas in a style of irreproachable purity. With only occasional exceptions his words and idioms conformed to the norms of classical Greek. In the Homily on the Eighth Psalm he uses Μαρκος instead of the classical Μαρκος. Such minor deviations actually enhance his purity of language because he was speaking in the correct language of the fourth century after not before Christ. 

1 Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 4, 10, 25, footnote. These requisites are defined in *Liber Quartus Rhetoricorum ad C. Herennium*, 12, 17.


Greek writer can rival him for purity of language. This purity, however, never degenerates into purism, and it is with the widest flexibility that he applies the rules of elegance."

Precision means the selection of such words as mean nothing vague, or too much, or too little, but just what the speaker desires to express. Cardinal Newman seems to say that Chrysostom lacked a high degree of precision.

As Commentator and Preacher, he, of all the Fathers, carries about him the most intense personality . . . . He is ever overflowing with thought, and he pours it forth with a natural engaging frankness, and an unwearied freshness and vigour . . . . He ever speaks from himself, not of course without being impregnated with the fullness of a Catholic training, but, still, not speaking by rule, but as if, 'trusting the lore of his own loyal heart.' On the other hand, if it is not a paradox to say it, no one carries with him so little of the science, precision, consistency, gravity of a Doctor of the Church, as he who is one of the greatest. The difficulties are well known which he has occasioned to school theologians; his obiter dicta about our Lady are among them.

Chrysostom's rhetorical background and intense personality sometimes did prompt him to statements which are not precise. Nevertheless, the great majority of such pronouncements are

5 Tixeront, Handbook of Patrology, 202.
6 Coppens, English Rhetoric, 28.
hyberboles. An example is seen in Chrysostom's words about the fallen Eutropius "who was shaking the whole world," but now is "Cowering with fright, more terrified than a hare or a frog." Obvious hyperbole does not impair precision if it is used with moderation. It is not one of the ordinary habits of Chrysostom's style, but is employed only on special occasions and under the influence of strong emotion, such as pity, grief or admiration. His precision in the use of words was such that "In reading him we soon realize that Greek is in his hands a very plastic medium that responds readily to his varying moods, and frequently exhibits something of the ease and suppleness of modern prose."

The second traditional requirement of oratorical language is arrangement (compositio) which, according to a Roman author, "est verborum constructio, quae facit omnes partes orationis aequabiliter perpolitas." The various precepts included under arrangement are given by the same author. The first precept is to avoid frequent hiatus. Chrysostom fulfills it flawlessly as even a hasty look at some of his works reveals. The second precept is to avoid excessive alliteration. Chrysostom uses alliteration frequently but not to excess. In the 497

10 D'Alton, Selections, vii.
11 Rhet. ad C. Heren., 4, 12, 18.
lines of the Seventeenth Homily on the Statues alliteration is used thirteen times. In the 288 lines of the Defense of Eutropius it is used about sixteen times. In the Sermon on the Resurrection Chrysostom shows his skill in alliteration in a beautiful passage.

... πολλάκις ὤπένης τὸν πλοῦσιον πρωτεύει ἐν τῇ εὐσεβείᾳ, καὶ οὐδὲν ὅφελμεν ὁ πλοῦτος τὸν ἐξοντα ἐκτὸς εὐσεβείας, οὐδὲ ἐξενία τὸν πιστὸν ἐγνώμενε παρεστῶτα αὐτόν μετὰ θαρροῦς τῷ ἀγίῳ θυσίαστηρίῳ.

The third precept is to avoid excessive assonance. It is not surprising that Chrysostom shows a marked fondness for this poetical and musical figure. Ameringer does assert that Chrysostom at times exceeds the limits of artistic moderation; but if Ameringer's examples contain the worst extremes, Chrysostom deserves little censure. One example is from the Defense of Eutropius.14

... ὥσπερ γὰρ τὸν ὠμὸν καὶ ἀπανθρωπὸν ἀποσταθεὶ οὐτώ τὸν ἐλεήμονα καὶ φίλανθρωπὸν προσίεται καὶ φιλεῖ.

12 Burns, Chrysostom's Homilies on the Statues, 27.
13 Migne, P.G., L, 437.
14 Ameringer, The Stylistic Influence, 54-55; Migne, LIII, 396.
If the same sound pattern of these parallel sentences was repeated three or more times in succession, it would certainly be open to criticism; but, as it stands, it presents a powerful thought in which the contrast is heightened by the carefully balanced structure.

The fourth precept is to avoid unusual transposition of words which does not produce a pleasing effect; the fifth is to avoid long sentences or phrases which are hard to follow and deliver. In the five sermons under consideration Chrysostom does not offend against these last two precepts. His word order exhibits manifold variety, but this aids rather than hinders comprehension. In the First Panegyric on St. Paul is a typical example.

\[ \text{Ἀλλὰ οἱ σκώληκες καὶ τὰ τραύματα χαλάτεται καὶ ἀπαρτεύτους παρεῖχον τῷ Ἰωβ ἔτος ἰσόνως.} \]

A considerable number of Chrysostom's sentences are long, but the symmetrical arrangement of the component parts results in smoothness, not confusion.

The third traditional requirement of oratorical language is dignity "quae reddit ornatam orationem, varietate distinguens." Chrysostom's subjects are full of dignity because they are the Scriptures, sacred feasts and Saints. The

15 Migne, P.G., L, 476.
16 Rhet. ad C. Heren., 4, 13, 18.
dignity of these subjects is reflected in his words. In the Sermon on the Resurrection he describes drunkenness with amazingly dignified and varied words; he calls it:

"ΕΚΟΥΣΙΟΣ ἡΜΙΑ, ΠΡΟΒΟΣΙΑ ΛΟΓΙΣΜῶΝ, ΣΥΜΦΟΡ eclipse καταχελμένη, νόσημα Χλενασώμενον, δαιμων, λο Θείρετος καὶ Παραφροσῦνης Χαλεπώτερα."

The words employed by Chrysostom were either used by the people in daily conversation or they were readily understood by them; but the way in which he used ordinary words was far from ordinary. He united sublimity of thought with beauty of expression so perfectly that two French editors of his works could truthfully exclaim:

Illud autem apud omnes convenit, nulhum sive inter Graecos sive inter Latinos oratores tanta eloquentia inclaruisse, ita ut solus 'Cicero Christianus' dici meretur. Si enim ad res ipsas attindere volueris, habes illam argumentorum vim, quae dissolutis omnibus omnium difficultatum nondum devictum errorum veritatis splendoribus op-primit; sin autem dicendi modum considerare magis placuerit, quam perspicuus lectoris cujuslibet oculis patet, nemini non intelligendus! Quam purus et venustus in loquendo! Quam verborum delectu et abundantia mirabilis! Quam cupiditates excitare potens! Quam efficax modo plausus, modo lacrymas nunc odium, nunc amorem, iram saepè, saepius misericordiam imperare, prout orationis materies suggesterit.18

17 Migne, P.G., L, 434.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUDING APPRAISAL

Speaking of St. Paul Chrysostom once said "His good deeds surpass all expression, and all that I can say, as far as the masters of eloquence surpass me."¹ Very few critics have seconded this modest self-evaluation.

John willed and desired that every trace of sin be washed from the souls of his people. He set forth his lofty ideals for a preacher before he began to preach. Throughout his life he worked to reduce his theory to practice. "Few lives, perhaps, have been more tragic, but none fuller or more fruitful. Saint John Chrysostom remains to posterity as the prince of Christian orators."² None of the five sermons discussed in this thesis has any direct bearing on the tragedy of Chrysostom's life, but they all afford some notion of the fruitfulness of that life.

¹ Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, 98.
The best of the five sermons is the Defense of Eutropius. The Austrian Benedictine, Chrysostomus Baur asserts: "In reality this oration can rightly be designated as a masterpiece of psychology and of rhetoric; and not without reason is it probably the most frequently read of all his discourses, even in those intermediate schools which are not chained to the narrow restraint of the state regulations for schools."^3

A unique occasion was presented to Chrysostom when Eutropius sought refuge in his cathedral. The Patriarch met the occasion with a completely unique speech. In language which is effulgent with metaphors and comparisons, he exposes the emptiness of merely temporal success; then in the name of Christ and His Church he seeks mercy for Eutropius. The immediate effect of this plea is evident from Chrysostom's own words: "Have I softened your passion and expelled your wrath? Have I extinguished your cruelty? Have I induced you to be pitiful? Indeed, I think that I have; your countenances and the streams of tears you shed are proofs of it."^4

The power of this sermon is perennial, because the deceptive allurements of worldly prosperity still blind many men; and hardened hearts often fail

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3 Baur, Chrysostomus und Seine Zeit, II, 104.
to see the eternal beauty of mercy. It would be difficult or impossible to find another speech to match this one in emotional power joined with permanent usefulness.

The second best sermon is the Seventeenth Homily on the Statues. The twenty-one homilies on the Statues "make up one of the most remarkable series of discourses of which the history of preaching has any record. They are models of the purest cast. 'Neither Cicero nor Demosthenes ever produced greater, or more elevated, or more lasting effects on their hearers than St. Chrysostom.' 5 In the Seventeenth Homily Chrysostom shows his people how many benefits God had bestowed on them through the calamities they had just suffered. The sermon is a magnificent expression of Christian optimism. Here too Chrysostom made exceptional use of an exceptional opportunity.

Third place is probably due to the Sermon Against Drunkenness and on the Resurrection. This discourse with just a few slight changes could appropriately be delivered today; so universal and significant is its language. The wording is colorful and dramatic and always in keeping with the subject.

5. George Leopold Hurst, An Outline of the History of Christian Literature, New York, 1926, 86. This outline was written for English speaking Protestants. The quotation within this quotation is from the Dictionary of Christian Biography, I, 518.
The Homily on the Eighth Psalm, a typical example of Chrysostom's scriptural exposition, would justify the following critique.

He combined in a harmonious whole the classical, the biblio-exegetical, the rhetorical, the popular, and the practical. He is preeminent in his power of rendering a subject clear, and to that end uses an immense number of illustrations. In him the exegete and the orator are combined in the highest degree, but he is much more restrained than his rivals, and always has a practical purpose.

The First Panegyric on St. Paul receives last place mainly because of the great excellence of the other four. Much, however, of its artistic effect and some of its practical force is weakened by an excessive use of emphatic expressions.

From the beginning of his preaching career until its end, at the time of his exile, Chrysostom's manner for the most part shows very little change. Wisdom, clarity, fittingness, charm and elegance are found in all five sermons discussed in this thesis. The one aspect which does exhibit change is his use of the elevated style. The great majority of his sermons are couched in a simple, moving and familiar tone. The homilies on the Statues, the discourses on Eutropius and a number of other sermons inspired by similar circumstances, exhibit "a brilliant and deeply moving eloquence, which reminds one, in spite of wide

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divergences, of the classical eloquence of Athens and Rome, and which often enough are their equal." In both the First Panegyric on St. Paul and the Defense of Eutropius the tendency to excessive use of rhetorical devises is noticeable. In the latter sermon this tendency is better controlled than in the former. Nevertheless, in neither of these two sermons does over-emphasis of statement or profusion of metaphors seriously obstruct Chrysostom's practical aim.

Ameringer recognizes occasional excesses in the sermons of Chrysostom; yet he rightly defends his ornate style. In no way then do we regard it as a misfortune that Chrysostom proclaimed the simple truths of Christianity in the polished language of profane rhetoric, nor do we wish that he had rather chosen the plain and unadorned style of the first preachers of the Gospel. Such a course would have been altogether unsuited to the needs and exigencies of the times. The refined and cultured audiences of Antioch and Constantinople would have ignored a preacher whose exposition of doctrine was devoid of the graces and embellishments of language which they prized so highly. The heretics and infidels, who were either to be refuted, or won over to the truth, would have scorned and ridiculed him. He would have done a poor service to the religion whose foremost champion divine Providence had destined him to be. 8

Critics may call Chrysostom's style Asiatic or Attic, but Cardinal Newman ably argues against the aptness of such

7 Cayré, Manual of Patrology, I, 481.
8 Ameringer, The Stylistic Influence, 103.
classification. His words are a reminder of Chrysostom's stress on the spiritual character of the preacher.

Great as was his gift or oratory, it was not by the fertility of his imagination, or the splendor of his diction that he gained the surname of 'Mouth of Gold.' We shall be very wrong if we suppose that fine expressions, or rounded periods, or figures of speech, were the credentials by which he claimed to be the first doctor of the East. His oratorical power was but the instrument, by which he readily, gracefully, adequately expressed,—expressed without effort and with felicity,—the keen feelings, the living ideas, the earnest practical lessons which he had to communicate to his hearers. He spoke, because his heart, his head, were brimful of things to speak about. His elocution corresponded to that strength and flexibility of limb, that quickness of eye, hand, and foot, by which a man excels in manly games or in mechanical skill. It would be a great mistake, in speaking of it, to ask whether it was Attic or Asiatic, terse or flowing, when its distinctive praise was that it was natural. His unrivalled charm, as that of every really eloquent man, lies in his singleness of purpose, his fixed grasp of his aim, his noble earnestness.

Both Chrysostom's precepts for preachers and his sermons share in the supra-temporal glory of the Saint.

Truth is that he is neither of the days of the Caesars nor of our days. He is of the Church and of all time. The outward trappings of the period in which he lived lent local colour to his words, as the life and scenery of Palestine, the labour of its fishermen, shepherds and husbandmen, gave perfect setting to the parables of Christ. Another millennium and a half may pass and the pages of his books will still be turned by other hands than ours, and glowing passages will be found in them to stir the hearts of men. His writings are an heirloom of mankind.10

10 Joseph Husslein, S.J., author of the preface to Attwater, St. John Chrysostom, ix.
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B. ARTICLE

The thesis submitted by Mr. George J. Wuest, S.J., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Classics.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Jan. 29, 1955
Date

Raymond V. Schoeder, S.J.
Signature of Adviser